

MNSCC Candidate Questionnaire



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Senate District 26



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Public Safety Issues

Do you feel safe in the communities where you live, work, and play?
Why or why not?

I feel safe because I am a white, privileged, cis-woman. However, what will create insecurity is the insecurity of many who are increasingly facing economic distress in this pandemic due to job loss and may be facing homelessness and hunger.

What does the phrase “public safety” mean to you?
What builds safety? What detracts from it?

Public safety is when everyone has their basic needs met for healthcare, housing, and food. Safety is also a deep sense of community and responsibility to others based on our shared values and respect for one another. The current fear mongering promoting law and order is only serving to divide us and distract from the unity we need right now to tackle the real issue of public safety and that is the uncontrolled coronavirus pandemic.

<p>What is your understanding of the diversity of opinions around public safety in your district? How do your constituents think about what builds safety and what detracts from it in your district?</p>	<p>I live in a very diverse district that has experienced changing demographics over the past decade. Communities are geographically isolated from one another, reducing interactions, familiarity, understanding and respect. This leads to differences in the experience each community has regarding what creates safety and who provides that safety. While groups such as the NAACP and our Diversity Council have held public sessions to create more understanding, there are other political forces fomenting fear and division using urban as a surrogate for race and ethnicity. This is harmful to our community.</p>
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<p>What changes do you think would help prevent violence and other undesirable behavior in your district? How will you go about making those changes?</p>	<p>We need adequate funding for our public educational institutions, investment in low-income housing, living wages, and universal access to basic health services, including for mental health and substance use disorders. In the midst of this pandemic, we need leaders who are willing to say it is time for shared sacrifice and those who have profited most over the past decade must step up if we are to ensure the health and wellbeing of everyone in our community.</p>
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Police Issues

<p>What are your thoughts on the general culture of the police departments in your district?</p>	<p>The leadership within the Rochester PD has been open to work with and collaborate with our communities of color to address a known history of racial profiling. Changing long-standing culture and diversifying the police force will take time. An important step has been collaboration with area mental health experts which have provided 60% of the force in the Memphis Crisis Intervention Training model. Based on community requests for transparency, in June the RPD established an Accountability Dashboard to document what types of force were utilized in all use of force events. There is a good faith effort in transparency and accountability.</p>
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<p>* What police reforms, if any, do you think would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.</p>	<p>I support the proposed statewide database on inappropriate use of force by police at the POST Board to prevent officers being rehired elsewhere following dismissal and to raise red flags about those with a history of violence or harm to civilians. End warrior training and eliminate the awarding of points in hiring to those with prior military training and experience. We need to prioritize a mindset among officers that they are part of the community and there to protect and serve. Community Police Policy Oversight Committees need meaningful power to review and provide input to policies and to define the community's view of public safety needs.</p>
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<p>* What changes to police budgets, if any, would help your</p>	<p>Increase budget for training in crisis intervention and to support increased incorporation of people with social service backgrounds. This is particularly important with an anticipated</p>
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<p>district or the state? Please elaborate.</p>	<p>rise in homelessness and decompensated mental health due to the pandemic. Also important given the recognition of the extremely high percentage of those with substance use disorders who become entangled with the legal system. I am not in favor of budgeting for School Resource Officers. Rochester has one of the highest racial disciplinary disparities in the state and the positioning of SRO's in our schools heightens the possibility that legal versus other restorative justice methods are used to address behavioral issues.</p>
<p>Are there any bills around policing that you would join or champion? What are they and why?</p>	<p>I favor passing those bills not yet passed that were part of the 2020 Minnesota Police Accountability Act, such as those addressing community oversight commissions, community led public safety, police officer critical incident reporting. The bills that were put forward represented over a year's worth of work by countless people and incorporated community input by those most impacted. Our AG, Commissioner of Public Safety and the bicameral POCI Caucus are the leaders with the expertise I would look to regarding what issues are most critical for safeguarding all of our citizens.</p>

Criminal Court Issues

<p>Do you notice any inequities in the courts in your district? What do you see as the driving force in those inequities? How can we count on you to respond to any inequities?</p>	<p>Clearly there are marked disparities in who becomes incarcerated with BIPOC members and LGBTQ youth disproportionately imprisoned. Within our local jail I understand that people with substance use and mental illness are overrepresented. I am certain that generational poverty and housing insecurity have played a role. We need investment in housing, healthcare and appropriate youth interventions to prevent entanglement with law enforcement.</p>
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<p>Diving into topics like bail, services for crime survivors, court fines and fees, special prosecutors, and sentencing and probation guidelines can illustrate how public policy has immense and diverse impacts on Minnesotans. Are there any bills around criminal court practices that you would join or champion? What are they and why?</p>	<p>Consideration of financial hardship and alternatives to cash fees, fines, bail to prevent people from becoming entrapped in debt. Preventing public access to arrest records to prevent discrimination in housing and employment. Reform and reduce the extremely lengthy probation periods that pose risk for reincarceration and disenfranchises people. End shackling of youth in courtrooms as this risks permanent psychological damage and prejudices judges. No youth, who commits a crime before they are fully emotionally developed, should face life in prison without parole.</p>
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Incarceration Issues

<p>In your opinion, what is the purpose of incarceration? Do you believe that incarceration accomplishes those purposes well? If not, why not, and what would you do about it?</p>	<p>Incarceration should be instituted to prevent harm to self and others. There is no real evidence that it is a deterrent to repeat offenses. It is especially counterproductive and harmful to separate families as punishment for nonviolent offenses. Our public safety dollars would be better spent in mental health and SUD treatment, education (especially literacy) and skills training for meaningful future employment.</p>
<p>What do you know about alternatives to incarceration and how they address violence and other undesirable or criminalized behavior? What incarceration alternatives do you support and why?</p>	<p>I have no expertise in this area. It is clear that if violence has been associated with intoxication, impaired judgment or mental illness, that treatment should be prioritized. I also understand that there have been trials in other countries of community corrections involving high levels of monitoring, treatment to address anti-social thinking, as well as expectations of responsibility, holding imprisonment as a impetus for adherence.</p>
<p>* Every district in Minnesota is home to people who have experienced incarceration. How do you think issues like access to health care, visits/phone calls/emails, education, and other programming while incarcerated affect your constituents?</p>	<p>Risk for parole violations and recidivism are heightened if the formerly incarcerated has been separated and isolated from their social supports. It is thus very important that people continue to feel connected to community. As most incarcerated in MN suffer mental health or SUD, medical care is critical to restoring people to productive life once on the outside. Education, especially literacy, could be the most valuable redemptive practice.</p>
<p>* For purposes of drawing legislative districts, should incarcerated persons be counted as part of the district where they are incarcerated, or should incarcerated persons be counted as part of the district where they had their last residential address? Or something else? Why?</p>	<p>We should end prison-based gerrymandering. Given the disproportionate incarceration of people of color, this reduces the voting power of the communities that the incarcerated previously resided in.</p>
<p>Are there any bills around incarceration or probation that you would join or champion? Which ones and why?</p>	<p>We should not have any for-profit detention or prison facilities. For non-violent offenses, family impacts must be considered, especially harm in incarcerating the primary breadwinner and impacts on children. Community service & restorative justice should be an alternative sentence for non-violent offenses. We should reduce probation periods.</p>
<p>Reentry Issues</p>	
<p>* People return from incarceration to every district in Minnesota. How do you think</p>	<p>Collateral consequences of felony incarceration prevent people from becoming re-established in their communities with major impacts on housing, employment and education. All of these</p>

<p>issues like access to housing, employment, health care, recovery resources, mental health supports, basic needs, and voting or civic engagement affect your constituents?</p>	<p>factors are critical to becoming productive citizens. Restoration of voting rights to those now in the community is a statement of civic responsibility. I believe all who are residing in our community must be able to vote.</p>
<p>What, if any, changes would you make to re-entry policies? And what investments, if any, would you make to re-entry supports in your district? Why?</p>	<p>There should be supportive housing with employment counselors to ensure that people have an opportunity to re-establish themselves. This might also involve a partnership with businesses willing to provide training and employment to the formerly incarcerated. We should end discrimination in public housing and student loan programs.</p>
<p>Public Health Issues</p>	
<p>What are your thoughts about how the Department of Corrections has responded to the coronavirus pandemic?</p>	<p>There has been comprehensive testing of the incarcerated, work release for those close to release dates, as well as conditional medical release. These are appropriate responses.</p>
<p>* What, if any, public health crises do you think have inequitable impacts on people who are involved in the criminal legal system, and how can we count on you to respond to these public health crises?</p>	<p>There is increased violence against trans people of color and youth who end up incarcerated. They need particular attention and care and legal protections. In addition, those with HIV or HCV require treatment to prevent worsening of their disease status and infection of others. This is where universal access to essential healthcare is important. Finally the availability of guns and failure to have back ground checks and close loop holes for gun purchases is critical to prevent widespread gun violence. Addressing gun sense legislation is a public health emergency.</p>
<p>Personal Connections</p>	
<p>* Are there any ways in which you feel personally connected to issues in policing, criminal court, incarceration, and/or re-entry? What is personal about these issues for you, and how will that impact your priorities and/or stances?</p>	<p>This is personal in so far as mass incarceration is not serving our nation and we must end the disproportionate harm it is causing to our indigenous nations and communities of color.</p>
<p>How can your constituents support you in accomplishing any changes you've outlined here?</p>	<p>I have been a member of MSCC and appreciate your advocacy. No legislation gets passed without informed and mobilized citizens calling for change, raising the issues, and bringing forward solutions.</p>